

148.  
AN  
ADDRESS  
TO THE  
ELECTORS  
OF

*Great Britain. Electors*

In which the Constitution of ENGLAND is considered and asserted;

PARTICULARLY,

The original Design, Nature, Privileges and Power of the HOUSE OF COMMONS, as opposed to Ministerial Influence and Corruption.

AND

The Independancy of PARLIAMENTS earnestly recommended, as the only Means to make the Nation happy.

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By an INDEPENDANT ELECTOR.

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L O N D O N :

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AN

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Great Britain.

In which the Constitution of England  
is described and asserted.



The original of this  
manuscript is  
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British Library.

AND

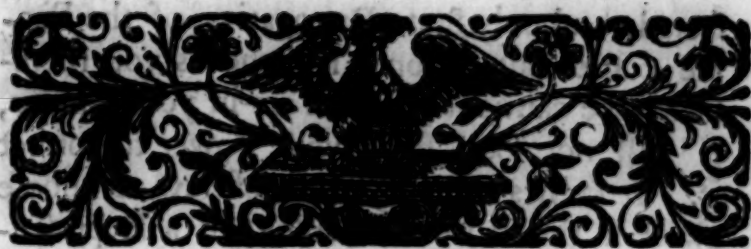
The importance of this  
manuscript is  
evident, as it  
contains the  
original of the  
Constitution of England.

By the Hon. the Earl of Sandwich

LONDON

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AN  
ADDRESS  
TO THE  
ELECTORS  
OF  
*Great Britain.*

*Friends and Countrymen,*



ONCE more the great invaluable Privilege of electing a *Representative* of a People is devolved upon you, use it therefore as it deserves; as you are Free, it is in your Power to have it free also. *Free or Dependant* it must be, there is no Medium, choose which you like. This

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sacred, and only State Prerogative of the People comes but seldom, it behoves you therefore to be cautious; if you err in your Choice, it will not soon be in your Power to correct it. It comes to the Share of few to choose twice in their Lives; choose then a Representative you would live under. If you would be free, choose a free Representative; if a Slave, leave the Choice to your Enemies.

Did you consider how precious that Liberty is you so often talk of, how difficult to preserve, how impossible (once lost) to restore; that the *House of Commons* is the Guardian of that Liberty, and you Choosers of that Guardian, the Importance of the Trust would guide your Vote, and you could never err in your Choice; as you are Free, so should your Representative be, the one should be the Model of the other; a Free Parliament represents Free Men, a Dependant Parliament Slaves.

Slavery is the Subjection of those who want Power, or, which is the same Thing, whose Power is enfeebled by Corruption, to arbitrary and lawless Influence, for no other would be Slaves. The whole Power of the People is in the Elected; if the Elected are corrupted, your Power is betrayed, and Slavery consequently is your Lot. This is not ideal, 'tis real Slavery, beware then with whom you trust that precious Charge, the Power of the People of *Great Britain*.

And



And here I would recommend to your Consideration, the important Share the House of Commons holds in the State, its Nature, Use and Influence, and the true End of its original Institution. This is too large a Topick to treat of at present; I shall only consider so much of the Constitution as is necessary to demonstrate the great Consequence of a *general Election*, and how much it behoves the Electors to choose those who are worthy of it.

Monarchy is by most agreed to be the best of Governments, if Princes were always wise and good; for where one governs, there can be no Competition, no Jealousy, no Faction to tear, rend, or weaken the State; but the Operations of Government are quick, steady, vigorous and bold; less liable to Opposition, and less still to be defeated: And this is the happy Consequence of being governed by the wise and regulated Will of *One*. So on the other Side a depraved Will, (too generally found in Princes, who are always exposed to the strong Temptations of Ambition) aims to introduce *Tyranny* and *Slavery*; this renders it necessary to be corrected and restrained.

A Monarch therefore has the Power to exercise the greatest Good, or to introduce the greatest political Evil; that is, to dispense to the Subject all the Blessings of Freedom, or give them the Curse of Slavery: To procure

therefore all the Advantages of Monarchy, and to restrain this depraved Will, and prevent the Miseries incident to it, is the Model and Design of the British Constitution, and more particularly the Function of the House of Commons.

To procure then this Good, the *Benefits of Monarchy*, the King's Will is so circumscribed, or more properly regulated by Law, that he can do no Wrong; and consequently the Nation freed from the Havock of Tyranny and Ambition, while it enjoys the Sweetness of Liberty and Repose flowing from the wisest Laws.

But if the King (say the Enemies of this Constitution) will not be governed by the Laws, if he will not suffer his Power to be restrained, where is your Resource? To what Tribunal can you appeal, how can you be redressed? The Answer is at Hand, the King has the whole executive Power of the Laws, but he, like all other Kings, can act only by his Agents; his *Ministry* execute his Will, but they execute it at their Peril; they must act according to Law, for the *Law only is his Will*; and in this Sense he can do no Wrong; the Law imputes no Imperfection to him; if he errs, 'tis the Error of his Ministers; if they do wrong they are answerable for it; they cannot justify male Administration by the King's Commands; his Commands have no Authority,

Authority, but as they are warranted by Law.

Here then is the great Power peculiarly residing in the House of Commons; from whence is derived the great Benefits of monarchical Government, which proceeds from the just and regular Administration of the Laws; for what Man will dare to dispense with them, or act contrary to them, though under the Shelter of the King's Authority, and conformable to his Will, when he is subject to the severe Animadversion of the House of Commons, and liable to be brought to a just Punishment! No Man so great but is subject to this Power; here therefore must be the Seat of Liberty, where sits the Scourge of Tyranny.

Hence it is, from this Restraint framed and interwoven in our Constitution, *the King can do no wrong*. Hence the People have no coercive Power against the Prince, since the Policy of the State makes the Minister answerable for his Conduct. Coercive Power over the King is a ministerial Doctrine; subversive of the Constitution, and destructive of the King's Rights. It is a Doctrine propagated by *ministerial Tools*, introduced merely to screen wicked and ambitious Ministers; for fain would they justify illegal Measures, under the specious Pretext of their Master's Commands, and lay the Blame on his Will, not their

their own vile Abuse of Power. The *Crime* is his, though the *Act* is their own; the Fault is to be imputed to him, what in them they would have considered the Effect of their Duty and Allegiance, and thus blacken his Innocence by their Crimes, at any Rate to save themselves from Punishment, whatever becomes of him. But our *Constitution* is wiser, and has provided against such dangerous Expedients; it secures the King from the Snares of his deluding Ministers; it protects the Prince from the Insolence of the Subject, as well as the Subject from the Tyranny of the Prince. It gives him no Power but to do good, his Commands are *void* when *illegal*.

Thus all the Mischiefs of a monarchical Government are avoided, this happy Constitution taking from the Prince the Means of doing Harm, by investing in the *House of Commons* this Power to watch, check and curb the slavish Submission of his Ministers to his Will, or their too forward Zeal to pursue Measures agreeable to him, which may in the least prove destructive of *English Liberty*, or of it's true Interest.

The other House, most noble as it is, and great as it's Privileges are, is not so properly the Seat of *English Liberty*; they have so near a Connection with the Prince, as naturally promote his Interest, though perhaps derogatory to those of the People. Their Proximity



mity to the Throne their Station and Dignity give them continually too flattering Expectations of Honours, Power, and Riches from the Favour of their Prince, to permit their close Attention to the Interests of the People; their *Privileges* are born with them, they claim no Authority from the People, and therefore more naturally incline to Measures and Views calculated more likely for the Court Climate than the Contry's Good; besides here generally reside the chief and most numerous of the King's Ministers, who are, as I have said, the Agents of his Will, and accountable for their Conduct: This makes it necessary some independant Power, independant of that House, should be a Check on the Authority of such Ministers, jealous of their Schemes, and vigilant over their Measures, to accuse, impeach and punish. It is somewhere else then, the Dignity, the Privileges, the Power of the People must reside.

The House of Commons then is the *Palladium of Liberty*, where the People intrust all that is dear to them; a House whose Members are all chosen by themselves, and derive their Authority from their Choice; they are no other than a *Representative* of the People, or rather the People themselves, cloathed with the Power of the State: Here *Liberty* has placed her Throne, from hence she dispenses her happy Influences. How

necessary then is it to send Members worthy  
so great a Charge!

To be free then, is to have a House of  
Commons that is so: Free from all Influence  
and Corruption, independant of the arbitrary  
Will of the Prince, independant of his Mini-  
sters, independant of their Smiles and Favours,  
independant of all Power but what is legal;  
in short, independant of every Thing, but  
that Liberty of which it has the Honour to  
be the Support and Guardian.

From this short View of our happy Consti-  
tution it appears, that a British King is a great  
Monarch, endowed with all the Power of  
State to do Good, incapable of doing Harm:  
The King can do no wrong, is a Maxim of  
our Laws, which imputes all Perfection to  
the King, no Error or Imperfection whatever;  
therefore all Submission, Subjection and Al-  
legiance is due to him, although Mischiefs  
should happen in the State, since his *Mini-  
sters* only are accountable for his Conduct, of  
which they are the *Instruments*. There can be  
no *Coercion* over the Actions or Person of the  
Prince; no legal Right can be taken or forced  
from him, for any Act of his, because his  
Power is exercised by his Ministers, who are  
accountable for his just Administration, and  
therefore all the Ills that can arise from an  
arbitrary Exercise of Power are punished in  
them. The King can lose no Right, Pre-  
rogative,

*incur and 136*

rogative, or Forfeiture by his free Will and Consent, because he has no Power to do ill.

The King's *Prerogatives* are given him for the Good of the People, his Interests are their Interests; none but a weak Prince can mistake them or disunite them; they mutually support each other: But a Minister's Interests may differ from both, their Views are often partial and center in themselves; they abuse the King's Prerogative, and make it stoop to their private Ambition; they prostitute the People's Interest to promote their own; as if the King's Power and Subjects Treasure were only fit to aggrandize themselves and Families.

Ministerial Power is therefore only to be dreaded and guarded against with the utmost Care, Prudence and Vigilance. Their Schemes and Measures are to be entertained with great Caution and Jealousy, and all *unconstitutional* Acts punished with the greatest Severity; but how can this be done, but by an *independant House of Commons*, chose by independant Electors?

Hence therefore may plainly appear what Sort of Persons ought to be rejected or accepted for this great Office; all those who are under the Influence of the Crown, and the Ministry, must be necessarily dependant. Therefore all *Place-Men* and *Pensioners*, must be

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cut off; none of these ought to have the least Share in the Favour of a British Elector; for ill would such Persons fit to execute an Office, formed and created to restrain that Profusion of British Treasure, of which they so lavishly partake, and for which they in their Turn must support at all Adventures the Measures of their Patrons, be they ever so destructive.

*Places and Pensions*, in the Hands of wicked Ministers, are distributed as the Rewards of their own Corruption, and no Man can enjoy these Bounties of State, that cannot shew by a slavish Zeal to a wicked Minister, that he first well deserved to be h—d, following the Advice of the Poet.

*Aude aliquid gyaris aut carere dignum,  
Si vis esse aliquis.* —

Thus the Rewards due to honest Men are made the Means of Corruption to seduce them, and are given them for the *Want* of that very Merit for which only they should *serve them*; Ministers and their Favourites, are therefore improper Objects for the British Electors.

The Liberty of *Englishmen* depends, as I have said, on the Power of Parliament; which restrains all Acts of State within their due and legal Bounds; but the Acts of State are performed



formed by Ministers and their Agents; therefore such ought to have no Vote in that House, where only their own Misconduct can be censured, rectified and punished.

All Sorts of Dependants ought to be rejected, not only such, who are rendered so by actual Enjoyment of Places and Pensions, but as much as possible those who have any Connection with them, or with any Member whatever of the other House. The Constitution is so jealous of her Electors, that the Members of the other House are enjoined not to interfere. There is a natural Jealousy and Competition in all concurrent Powers; and therefore each Power should be independant and uninfluenced by its Competitor, otherwise it would be preposterous for a dependant Power to contest with that Power to which it is dependant; a constitutional Dependancy in the different Estates, otherwise than on the Law only, is inconsistent and absurd.

These being to be rejected, naturally point out who are to be chosen. You have in every County, every Borough, Men of Probity and unshaken Honour; Men of Fortune, not liable to Temptation, and above the Allurements of Corruption; Men of Understanding, well able to assist the Deliberations of State, and to do the Duty of an honest Representative; such Men you ought to choose, Men whom you well know; your Neighbour,

bour, your Friend ; one who will have a due Regard to what you shall expect from him, and recommend to his Care, and who will think the Approbation of his Country his best and greatest Reward, and be proud to deserve it ; such a one you should choose, who is best and intimately acquainted with his Electors, your Trade and Commerce, and consequently best able to redress your Grievances and supply your Wants. He must be a Country Gentleman, no Courtier. These are the proper Objects for your Representatives.

Be jealous therefore of a Stranger, especially a Courtier, such who comes from far to offer you his Service ; one who is a Stranger to you, your Interest, and Principles ; for such there are who offer themselves. Treat this Attempt as the grossest Affront ; 'tis a tacit Reproach that you had none in your Community fit to represent you. These Men court you with a fawning Cringe, a false dissembling Look and servile Flattery, and not only offer you their Service, but offer you Money to let them serve you, as if you were to be bribed to your own Good ; they treat you as *Fool* and *Knave* ; a Fool to believe them, and Knave enough to be corrupted by them. No Man gives Money for nothing, much less to get into a Place of great Trust, attended with Care, Trouble and certain Expence. These Men mean nothing less, but by prostituting

tuting the Trust you bestow upon them, make you thereby to contribute to their own private Emolument and Service ; a Place or Pension is what they want, for which the Minister must in Return have all he wants, Money, Men, Ships : No matter how much, how many, or for what ; no matter what becomes of you, your Trade, Commerce, Liberty and Constitution ; they have *bought* you and therefore they may *sell* you. Thus you barter your Birthright for a Mess of Pottage, but sure you will consider well first.

Your Member should be, like *Milton's* Virgin, NOT UNSOUGHT BE WON ; you ought to deliberate amongst yourselves, who is the Person fit to be honoured with your Suffrage ; who is the Person that deserves to be entrusted with that sacred Depositum of your Liberty ; when found, you are to court him by all social and friendly Tyes, and the great Obligation he owes his Country to accept the Charge. You ought to choose a Representative, with the Caution, Prudence, and Foresight you would a Wife ; such a one whose Fidelity you could rely upon, whose Constancy and Faith would never abuse that solemn and sacred State, and vilely mingle with the Favourites of *Tyranny* and *Oppression*,

On the other Side, how unfit is a Person who unsought or unasked, like a common *Prostitute*,

*Prostitute*, offers and obtrudes himself upon you to repose in him that invaluable Trust wherein your All consists? Why is he so eager, why so self-sufficient to force himself on the free Choice of his Countrymen, and why accept of a Place attended, if duly executed, with Care, Vigilance and Trouble, merely as he pretends to serve you, who perhaps he never saw before? Such a Person carries with him the unerring Marks of a true *Prostitute*, who persuades you she loves you only the more easily to delude and betray you, a *Dalilab*, that disarms you of your Prudence, divests you of your Power, and gives you up bound to your Enemies.

These Marks are so plain, I wonder any such should attempt being Candidates; and more that they should succeed; the cloven Foot is so apparent, that the most unwary must see it: Choose therefore those you know, such whose try'd Merit and Honour has set him far above Corruption, his Fortune above Temptation, and his Conduct above Suspicion.

The Election of a Member of Parliament is a most serious Affair of the greatest Consequence, the noblest Privilege any Subject in the known World can boast of or enjoy; how therefore can it be abused? Consider well the Power and the Privilege with which you invest him: No Law can be made, altered or repealed



repealed, without his Concurrence ; no Money can be levied on you but by his Consent ; nay further, it is the sole Prerogative of that House to impose it. No Minister can oppress you, but that House can bring him to Punishment.

Independant Members are a Curb to lawless Power, the Dread and Scourge of the guilty Minister, and the safe Guardians of your Liberty ; they are the Judges of the Exigencies of the State, and no Power on Earth can exact a Shilling but by their previous Direction and Consent : Can you grudge then a Tax imposed by them, whom you yourselves have chosen for the Stewards of your Treasure. If they oppress you, thank yourselves : If they burthen you with penal Laws, thank yourselves : If they are *corrupt* and become the Tools of those whose Conduct they should watch over and censure, thank yourselves : If they approve Measures you ought to oppose, if they countenance, encourage and support those Men they ought to punish, thank yourselves. In short, if they betray your Liberties, and destroy your Constitution, thank yourselves who choose them. Take heed that such a Reflection (now only to be prevented) may not bring on Repentance when too late. Remember forty Days hence you cannot alter, retract, or amend what you have done for seven long Years, perhaps never. If you have a good independant Parliament, the Merit is wholly

wholly yours ; if a bad one, who can you blame but your deluded selves? you wear the Shackles you have made.

You find the Matter of which the Building is composed, it is your own Fault if it be putrid, infirm and rotten, when you have good, sound hearty Oak enough growing in your Soil which will never fail you. Let your Member, like the sturdy Oak, have an inflexible Virtue, that will resist the lawless Efforts, and tempestuous Tides of Power. Choose Materials which will secure you safe under its Roof; but if you use the slender Twig or rotten Beam, why should you wonder, why complain if it bends, warps, or breaks under the least Weight of *ministerial Power*; you knew it before you used it, why then did you use it.

Suppose, my Friends, that the baneful Disposition of the Times made it necessary for the Government, on pretended Exigencies, to oppress you (already greatly burthened) with *fresh Taxes*, or to patch up a *Peace* destructive of the Honour, Interest or Commerce of the Nation; or to lead your *Armies* at a great Expence on Expeditions no ways coinciding, but contrary to the true Interest of your Country; or to do any other Act of Power, destructive to your Liberties or true Interests, and the House should then be dissolved. Where would your Resentment go? Where would you seek Redress? Where but in a new and  
*independant*

*independant Parliament*, sent by yourselves to demand a Redress of Grievances, or if irre-*mediable* ~~deceivable~~, to punish the Authors of them.

Suppose Measures of this Kind were on foot, for it may be the Case, what in Prudence should you then do, but to elect Members with that Caution as you would do if those Measures were really existing? You cannot be hurt by your Caution, you will never repent sending a *worthy* Man to Parliament, you may in sending a *weak* or *corrupt* one. If the Ministry are jealous of you, shew likewise a prudent Jealousy of them. If they dare not trust you, send none but those you dare trust, none but Men who have their King, their Constitution, their Liberty at Heart. The Country Interest against the Court Interest; this will disappoint the artful Anticipations of cunning designing Ministers, who send you to an Election in a good Humour, that they may not hereafter fear you in a bad one; but let your Wisdom disappoint their Cunning, by a reasonable Choice of *Independants*.

It is a wise Observation of a great Man, that the *English Constitution* can never be *destroyed* but by a Parliament, a corrupt Parliament can only do it. So it may also be said, that its *Liberty* can never be supported and justly vindicated, but by an honest and *free Parliament*. As you are now to choose, which of the two will you send? the One to undo and be-

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tray you, or the Other to support and protect you? Can you hesitate which?

A Parliament will always protect you, in Proportion as it can curb and restrain the ministerial Power within its due Bounds; that is, in Proportion to its Freedom; but if it is dependant upon it, what will be the Consequence? Instead of protecting you, it will add Power to your Adversary, who will grow wanton with your Properties, and despise your Resentments. The Parliament in the Hands of a Ministry, (most dreadful Thought!) what can it not do? The Ministry, by the Principle of Self-love, will no doubt establish itself beyond the Reach of Punishment, and every anti-constitutional Act will be consecrated by parliamentary Sanction. Such a Ministry, so supported, may act even in despite of King or People. In such a Situation they might slight the King, and tyrannize over the People. What could the King do? he must be aided by his Parliament, but his Parliament is not under his but his Minister's Influence. He is therefore in their Power, he cannot change, alter or remove them: Their parliamentary Influence is necessary to support Court Measures; so he must submit his Prerogatives to their Care, and by a fatal Necessity, let them do as they list. They not only root themselves in Office, but give Law to their Prince, and tell him whom he shall choose for his Servants.



vants. A ministerial *Caprice*, as strange as this, has happened in the *English Annals*; and if the King is so treated, what must the People expect! They have nothing but Patience, and like the meek As, bear the Burthen brought upon themselves; a most deserved Punishment for their egregious Folly!

This, my Countrymen, is what I have at present to offer to you, without any Invectives on the deceased Parliament, or Observations on their Actions, you know them and *feel* them. However, it is now dismissed, for what Reason I will not presume to guess; but this I am sure of, that it is not for want of Complaisance or Submission to the ministerial Will. Remember that I have not applied to your Passions, but to common Sense; use it for once, and taste the *Benefit of an independant House of Commons*. You cannot chuse but use it, if you consider, that one Vote is sometimes the Majority that directs and determines the greatest political Events. One Vote in an Election may produce that Member, who on some critical Conjunction may save or destroy your happy Constitution, and with it the Liberty and Tranquillity of *Englishmen*. Think of this my Countrymen and give your *Vote*. *Independancy is the Word*.

F I N I S.

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Think of this my Countrymen and give your  
Vote. Independence is the Word.

T I N I S

